

Fabulous Firsts: **Bavaria** (November 1, 1849)

by John F. Dunn

This Bavaria “Fabulous Firsts” article is based primarily on an article by B. W. H. Poole in the August 23, 1937 issue of Mekeel’s Weekly, with images and supplementary information added.

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Bavaria was not only the first of the German States to issue adhesive postage stamps, but also the last to give up its special privilege of managing its own postal system and issuing its own distinctive stamps. So long as the old German Empire lasted, it continued the use of its own stamps, and on becoming a free state within the German Republic it retained this privilege until about sixteen years ago.



Late uses: Above left, 1919 “Free State Bavaria” overprints and surcharges complete (Sc. 231-233) plus 30pf (Sc. 200) Free State, each imperforated from upper margin tab, on insured letter with “MÜNCHEN 46” 1920 cancels and manuscript “Over 15,000 Marks”; above right, 1920 “Farewell” issue 1 mark corner margin block of four with marginal number 1, cancelled Markterlbach on registered philatelically inspired envelope.

Its pioneer labels appeared in 1849—just a year after King Maximilian II ascended the throne. On June 5th of that year His Majesty published an ordinance authorizing the issue of postage stamps and fixing the rates of postage.

Local letters and printed matter were carried for 1 kreuzer, subject to certain limitations of weight; the rate on ordinary single letters weighing not more than 1 loth (roughly one-third of an ounce) was fixed at 3kr for distances up to twelve German miles; while the 6kr stamps were for heavier letters and for single letters carried for longer distances. At that time the currency of the kingdom was the florin of 60kr, which had a value of about 40¢ in our money. It will thus be noted that the rates of postage were very low.



Bavaria Sc. 1: above, unused; right, a Plate I example showing complete dividing lines, tied by Wurzburg “396” mill wheel cancel on an 1852 folded cover to Dahier, also with “Wurzburg 19 Oct. 1852” circular datestamp.

Postage stamps of the three needed denominations were immediately prepared and, according to an elaborate “code of instructions” dated October 25th, 1849, these were to be placed on sale on November 1st following. The only items in this lengthy document of particular interest to philatelists are those concerning the prepayment of letters, viz :—

“1.—From the 1st November next the prepayment of matter sent by post in the interior of Bavaria must be effected exclusively by stamps, which the postal administra-

tion is entitled to sell according to Article VII of the Royal Ordinance of June 5th.

“2.—The stamps intended for the prepayment bear the figures of the single rates, according to the new tariff for the interior of Bavaria of 1kr in black, of 3kr in blue, and of 6kr in brown-red colors. Each stamp of the last two kinds carries in itself a red silk thread running from top to bottom as evidence of genuineness.”



Bavaria Sc. 2: above, unused; right, the 3kr blue



plate 3 single in combination with an 1850 6kr brown plate 2 strip of three (Sc. 5) tied by “155” mill wheel cancels to 1855 cover from Kempten (half oval December 16 datestamp) to Navan, Ireland, paying the 21kr single rate to the U.K. via France; also with red London PAID datestamp and transit markings on face.

The design, common to all three denominations, shows a double-lined numeral ornamented with arabesques within a square frame. The frame is inscribed at the top with BAYERN (Bavaria); at the bottom with FRANCO (Free); at the



An 1852 cover from Munich to Dublin, Ireland, with a total franking of 48 Kreuzers including a marginal pair and strip of three of the 9kr (Sc. 6) plus 3Kr Blue, plate 2, all tied with “217” mill wheel cancels as well as a red London and French exchange office Strassbourg circular date stamps.

right with KREUTZFR; and at the left with the value in words—EIN, DREI or SECHS. The small squares in the angles show the values in figures on a checkered ground.

The large central numeral on the 1kr is on a ground of maze-work which occupies the whole of the interior square. In the case of the other two values, the numerals are on a circular ground of solid color, this circle being flattened where it meets the inner lines of the border, thus causing the type generally known as “broken circle” (Scott type A1a). This type was never altered for the 3kr, but for the 6kr issued a year later, and additional values, the circle is always complete (Sc. type A2).



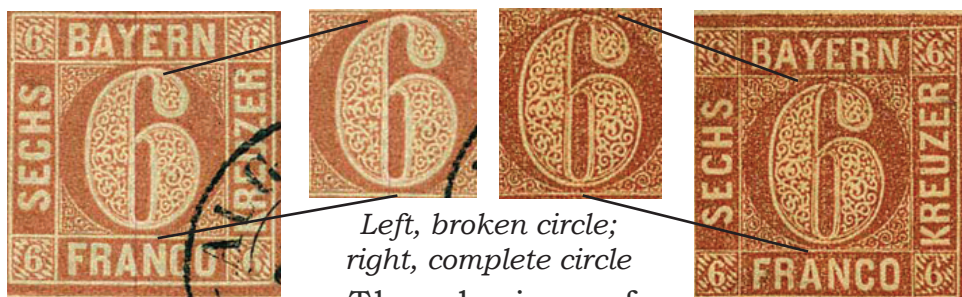
The Scott catalogue lists both types of the 1kr as belonging to this



Above left, 1849-50 1kr black, plate 2 plus horizontal pair of 1kr rose, plate I (pale original shade) with “243” mill-wheel cancels on December 13, 1850, folded letter from Nuremberg to Berching. This is the finer of the two known covers showing a combination franking of the 1kr; above right, Bavaria Sc. 5, with complete circle.

issue, whereas only the broken circle variety properly belongs to the first issue.

The other 6kr, produced from a new plate, was certainly not issued until 1850 and probably not until 1851. The stamp listed as number 3, therefore, should by rights be included with the series of 1850-58. In other words, it belongs to the second issue and not to the first. [Scott now lists the broken circle design type A1a as Scott 3, in the 1849 issue; and the complete circle design type A2 as Scott 5, in the 1850-58 issue.] See page 5.



1849 6kr
Bavaria Sc. 3

Left, broken circle;
right, complete circle
The designs for
these stamps were
drawn by P. Haseney,

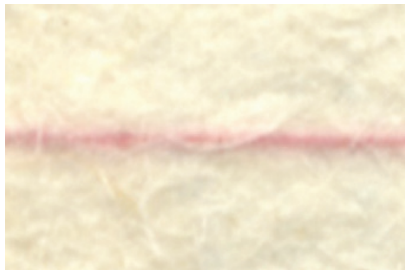
1850 6kr
Bavaria Sc. 5

and the dies were engraved on steel by F. J. Seitz of Munich. The printing plates were constructed from separate blocks or cliches struck from the original dies and clamped together in a printer's chase. For the plate of the 1kr the casts were taken in ordinary type-metal, there being ninety of these in all which were arranged in ten horizontal rows of nine each. The printing plates for the 3kr and 6kr also consisted of ninety impressions, but these were arranged in two panes of 45 stamps each (nine rows of five) placed side by side. The cliches for these values are said to have been struck in brass at the Mint and these impressions were soldered on to liars of iron in strips of five. The stamps were all printed by J. G. Weiss of Munich.



An unusual gutter strip of four of Bavaria Sc. 1

The 1kr was printed on ordinary white wove paper, but for the other two denominations a special greyish-white paper was employed, in the fabric of which silk threads were introduced. This paper, known as "Dickinson" paper from the name of its inventor, had the threads arranged vertically at intervals of 20mm so that one thread appeared in each stamp. The threads were introduced in the process of manufacture just before the pulp had lost most of its moisture and was actually an absorbent



John Dickinson patented silk-thread paper in 1830 for bank notes and later adapted the technology for stamps. Dickinson paper was used by Switzerland and Bavaria. Shown here is magnified view of a silk thread from the reverse of a Switzerland stamp.

paper. It was evidently intended that the threads should be especially visible on the backs of the stamps and with these Bavarian stamps this is almost invariably the case. The few exceptions one finds, with the thread showing more plainly on the design side, are due to the paper having been inserted wrong side up in the printing press.

The plate of the 1kr soon showed signs of wear, owing to the comparative softness of the type-metal of which it was

composed. Consequently, about September, 1850, a new plate was made for this denomination, the clichés of which were made of brass similar to those employed for the 3kr and 6kr. The new plate had the ninety impressions arranged in two panes of 45 each similar to the plates of the higher values.

Only 2,000 sheets were printed from this new plate when



Left side pane of 45 of Sc. 6, from sheet of 90

it was decided not only to alter the color but also to adopt a design conforming to that used for the other denominations then current. These later impressions of the 1kr printed from the brass cliches may

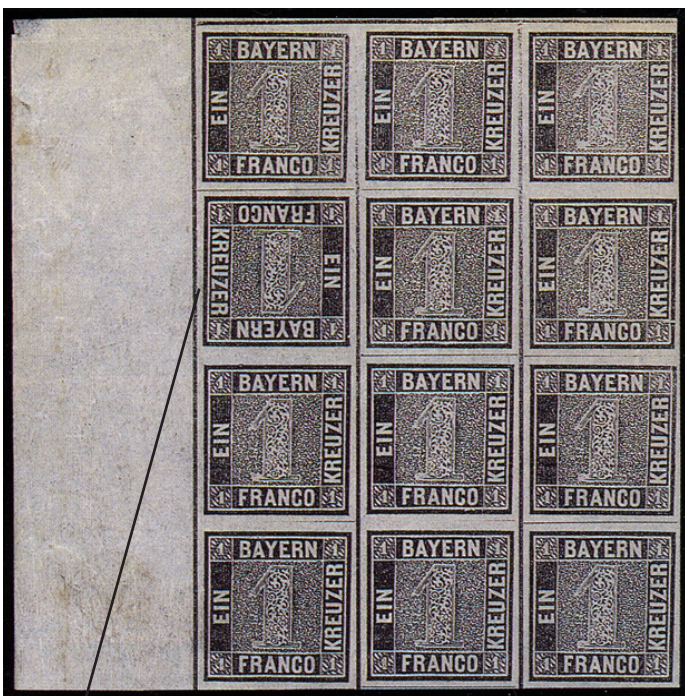


A comparison of Plate 1, left, and Plate 2 printings, right

be distinguished from the earlier printings by the greater sharpness and clearness of the details of the design. The color, also, is usually a more intense black than that used for the stamps printed from the type-metal plate.

While the 1kr was never regularly issued on the silk thread paper, specimens are known in this form. These stamps are considered as essays by the best authorities, but that they are of considerable scarcity may be judged from the fact that they are priced at \$50 in Gibbons' [1937] catalogue.

This value, in the grey-black shade, is also recorded as existing in a tete-beche pair, but whether this is a true tete-beche, caused by the inversion of one of the cliches on the plate, or due to two impressions (one upside down in relation to the other) being printed on the same sheet of paper, we cannot say.



Block of 12 of the 1kr with the inverted 1 (arrow). 2012 Scott catalogue value for a tete-beche pair is \$125,000

It is a great rarity, only a few examples being known, which is eagerly sought for by wealthy specialists in European stamps.

The 3kr of this issue exists in a great many strikingly different shades and the 6kr is an exceedingly rare stamp unused. Great care should be exercised in purchasing this variety, for most of the so-called specimens one sees are pen-cancelled stamps from which the cancellations have been fraudulently removed.